

# The Fiction Magazine Section

## TENTON'S SURPRISE



ED TENTON threw the dainty note into the fire, and reflectively watched the tinted sheet blacken and finally disappear.

"There's an end to that," he said, half aloud. "I guess maybe I'll marry Mary Horton after all."

For a person who has just been refused by the daughter of a near-millionaire, he smiled rather pleasantly.

True, Miss Horton had far less money than Miss Mainwaring, whose letter had just served to feed the flames, but Tenton was rather glad that things had turned out as they had.

A somewhat conceited person, he had not enjoyed eating the humble pie which Miss Mainwaring fed her admirers, and smiled comfortably as he recalled his easy triumph with Mary Horton three summers before.

She had been just budding into womanhood then, and she had already given promise of being a beauty.

Her father, a rich man, went in a small town, but he had an odd objection to travel and he never fared far from home, nor permitted his family to do so. His wedding journey had been his last, so Mary had never been outside of the county in which she had been born.

Commercial travelers and third rate dramatic companies were almost the only visitors to Carbondale, so when Tenton had come to visit an

elderly aunt, he had won Mary's love without effort. To him it had been merely a summer flirtation which he had been willing to carry on into the winter, since it had involved only the writing of letters which had given him practice at love making by mail.

To the girl, it had been an awakening of soul, but Tenton was too self-complacent to read between the lines of her letters. He had accepted smugly the frank worship of the girl, and did not realize that rapidly she was becoming a woman.

Tenton liked to write letters, and so the correspondence had continued and inspired of his adroit excuses as to why he could not come to Carbondale again, the girl seemed to expect that presently he would come to claim her hand.

Tenton had encouraged her belief, for he assured himself that should he fail to win the heiress he would have Mary to fall back upon. Now that Miss Mainwaring had written a very decided negative, he reached the conclusion that he was glad of it. His pride had been hurt a thousand times while he was making his campaign for the Mainwaring million.

Mary Horton was an only daughter and would receive at least \$60,000. That was plenty to start them, and he might even learn to live in a bonafide, where he could be the richest man in town. It sometimes was safer to be the largest frog in a small puddle, and in the city Tenton felt at times that he was little more than a pollywog—tadpole on the edge of the pond in which there were many

great frogs.

Some business matters must be closed up before he would be able to get away. Also, Tenton thought, with a pang, of the literary masterpieces with which he favored Miss Mainwaring, so in a graceful note he re-

rushed of affairs that preceded his trip to Carbondale.

He wired Mary that he was coming so, and she stepped from the train he was surprised that she was not on the station platform to greet him. Ruefully he made his way to his aunt's



"DO PEOPLE ALWAYS MEAN WHAT THEY SAY IN LETTERS?"

quested the return of his letters. He was somewhat surprised when he received a reply to the effect that he would receive them later; then the matter slipped his memory in the

home and accepted her surprised welcome with such toleration as he could command. He always had detested his aunt Hetty, but she lived in Carbondale and was his excuse for

coming to the town.

"Mary Horton?" repeated the old lady when greetings were over and Tenton ventured an inquiry as to the young woman. "She went past here this morning. She was riding with Jim Burke. Looks as if Jim had cut you out, Ted. In the last few months he's been seen pretty steady with Mary. Before that she didn't go out much."

Tenton smiled a superior smile. In the last few months he had been rather lax in writing to Mary. It might have been expected that she would be piqued and take up with one of the town boys, but now that he was on the ground he assured himself that he would send this man Burke about his business.

He had only a week in which to win, but that was time in plenty. So that evening Tenton went to call on the Hortons. He gasped with surprise as Mary came in to the room. He had thought of her merely as a pretty child, a dainty, clinging little thing in whose big blue eyes love should clearly, who was not prepared for the tall, graceful young woman who swept into the room with quite dignity, and who accepted his greeting with the self-possession of Edith Mainwaring herself.

He had meant to clasp her in his arms with an affection of rapture, and have it all over with in the first five minutes. Instead he found himself bowing low over her proffered hand, and presently he was sitting on a chair halfway across the room from her with the blood ringing in

his ears and a strange fluttering in his heart. He had come to court a country girl, and had found a goddess.

"I expected to see you at the station this morning," he said meaningfully when at last he found his tongue again.

"I thought that I would come," was her careless response, "but Mr. Blake asked me to drive over to the point, and it was such a beautiful morning that it seemed a pity to waste it standing around the gloomy old station."

"And you went driving with Blake when you knew that I was coming?" he reproached. "It was not like this last year."

"Other things are not as they were last year," she reminded. "I should not be surprised to hear that you had been running around with ever so many girls."

"You can think that!" Tenton's tones were properly tinged with shock and reproach. "Don't you know that there is but one little woman who has lived in my thoughts these two years. I have tried a hundred times to come to you, Mary. At last I have succeeded, and when I go back to town I want to carry with me your promise that I may come again, sooner this time, and claim you as my bride. Surely from my letters you could have seen that."

"Do people always mean what they say in their letters?" asked Mary. "I do," assured Tenton, impressively. "You know I meant what I

## The Strategist



AUNDERS, son of Strategy, did not risk giving off with the girl in the pullman section across the way. She did not look like a girl who would permit a flirtation in any shape or form.

She would probably call the porter or appeal to the male passengers and bring him into disgrace, a disgrace which would be fatal to his plans. Instead, he lingered behind when the girl went into the diner for luncheon and copied off the address of the label pasted on her suit case.

It was the sight of the label which had induced him to cast aside schemes more rash, for he argued that curiosity would lead the girl to read to its end a letter, when she would not listen to the completion of the first sentence of a verbal approach.

It was her glorious ensemble which had so appealed to Saunders and had caused him to assure himself that Miss Marietta Manson of Claverly was the most beautiful woman he had

wholly feminine handwriting, and in this, but only in this, was he disappointed, and when, at last, Miss Manson hinted that his probation was about to end, Saunders' cup overflowed with joy.

The next development was a card from Mrs. Shearer for a dinner dance with "To meet Miss Marietta Manson" in one corner. In his exuberance Saunders vowed that he would give the postman a box of cigars on his next trip, and then went out to order new evening clothes.

The function was a week distant and Saunders never knew how he passed the time. He was one of the first to enter the Shearer parlors, but his face fell as he saw a tall, dark girl standing beside his hostess. Wonderingly he made his way toward the pair, but his face lightened again as Mrs. Vance came forward with his lady of the pullman car.

"I want you to know Miss Clyde," she said as she laid a detaining hand on Saunders' arm. "Vance permit me to present Mr. John Saunders."

"Miss Clyde?" Saunders' voice was incredulous. The girl laughed lightly.

"I asked Mrs. Vance to introduce me before you met Etta," she said in

## Madge's Dinner



RS WALTON was to have helped with the dinner, but at the last moment her sister was taken ill and Madge was left to her own resources with such small knowledge as a course at cooking school had endowed her.

She had meant this dinner to be a triumph. Jack Hanley was going west in the morning and she wanted him to remember his last dinner in town. Perhaps she blushed as she even thought of the possibility of a proposal, but she hungered for the question that would set her heart at rest. Nor was she the first woman who had sought to reach a man's heart through his stomach.

But it seemed as though the course of true love—and the dinner—was not destined to run smoothly. Martha, who had cooked meals for the Walters since James Walton married, had gone to the wedding of a friend. Permission had been granted weeks ago and she was well out of the house before the call came for Mrs. Walton.

Madge, left alone, set about her tasks with a happy heart, imagining already another little kitchen where she should be mistress.

Martha had left a couple of pies to be baked and she had set them in the oven. But when it came to peeling the potatoes she found that the tubers had run out and she had to slip on her things and run down to the grocery.

On the way back Grace Maitland had met her and she simply had to stop in to see the new hat that Grace had received for Christmas.

When she got back to the house the potatoes were black and smoky, and with a cry of dismay she drew them

from the oven and set about making new crust.

There was plenty of mince meat in the house and soon two new pies were ready for baking. The roast was popped in, too, and she set about getting the vegetables ready.

The potatoes were bouncing around in the pot when another of the girls dropped in for a chat. She had her camera with her and insisted upon taking Madge in her floury apron. A lot of time was consumed in fixing up the light.

Just as Madge settled herself into a pose an odor filled the room and she fled shrieking to the kitchen, where the water had boiled off the potatoes. That ended the photography and after the pot had been scraped new potatoes had to be peeled and started.

The hoodoo pursued her and with ears strained for the sounds of the door bell she tried to hurry the dinner. Already Jack was 10 minutes late and for once she breathed a fervent prayer that he would be very late as she sprinkled powdered sugar over the pies in the hope that it might dry up the crust.

Tentatively she surveyed the scene, but Jack liked his meat rare and perhaps, after all, it might pass. She had forgotten to close the oven door while she made the fresh pies and the oven was hopelessly cold.

She was too excited to eat while Mr. Lane was talking, and I'm just dying to take you out to a restaurant and celebrate in proper style. Will you come?"

"Will you?" she echoed. "You dear! You didn't even laugh and I'm hungry and tired and cross and—"

"Do you think we could make it a double event?" he pleaded. "My salary will be raised for the new week and we can set up our own home, where you can practice on me all you want. Will you say yes, dear?"

## Her Story



ACK was busy on his novel in his study. Elizabeth was inspecting the ladder.

The result was not encouraging. She took up her pocket book, looked into that, then sighed. Then she went and tapped at Jack's door.

"O, come in," he called, rather impatiently. "Well, dear, what do you want?"

"Jack, dear, funds are low; can't

every annoyance from him so he could make the best of his talents.

She must not call it a pot-boiler, and must not let any one suspect it was so sordid a thing.

Snatching stray minutes through the days her little story grew.

It was a story of a poor seamstress, who at night depicted her woes and pleasures, her little longings and sorrows, in a little diary—told where she had worked, and what she had seen and heard. Many glimpses into the home life of many fam-

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"Well, we have a little gem sent in by her. A pasted called 'Threads and Patches.' It is a diary of a poor seamstress, and for outpourings of her soul in her little book she has outdone Marie Bashkirtseff."

Soon after this conversation a check for more than she ever dreamed could come from a short story came to Elizabeth.

Still she did not take Jack into her confidence. The money made him very comfortable, and as his dinners were good he forgot all about the lack of funds. Elizabeth did not care as long as he loved her.

At last the magazine containing her story came out. Jack bought it to read "Threads and Patches" to his wife.

He went into raptures over it and tears trembled on Elizabeth's lashes; the story was pathetic, read in Jack's pleasing manner.

"I never read a thing that moved me more," he sighed as he closed the magazine. "I wish I knew the woman who wrote it."

"Jack, dear, you do; you have lived with her a year."

"Elizabeth, you?"

"Yes, dear, I. I just wrote a little pot-boiler, because you hadn't time."

"Hadn't time? Why, if I could write like that it would be worth while."

He went over to her chair. "Elizabeth, dear," he urged, "let me boil the pots, and you take my place in the study. You can write."

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there are orders on the chest of a South American general.

There were clubs of all sorts and conditions, and in her increasing prosperity Enid found the \$5 or \$10 required as initiation no great strain upon her finances.

"I think clubs are perfectly lovely," she said demurely, when she showed Ned her last badge—the 10th—that she had acquired. "I meet such lovely people and I am developing my intellectual side wonderfully."

"The women's clubs have no beaten in one thing," said Ned reflectively. Enid brightened up at the concession.

"What is that?" she asked innocently.

"Politics," was the brutal answer. "You wait for the elections. Why, mere men don't dare put up one-half the tricks that are worked in women's clubs. They're wonders at electioneering."

"I think you're horrid," said Enid, with a stamp of her pretty foot. "I'd rather be a club woman than the domestic drudge for some man."

"That's the trouble with clubs," said Ned blandly. "They give you such advanced ideas. I don't ask you to be a drudge. I just want a wife and only ask that she be at home occasionally."

"No doubt you will find one such," said Enid unconsciously quoting Mrs. Clara Hemmingsway-Brown. "There are many women who still resist the advance of progress and find their highest sphere in the kitchen and the nursery."

"There's only one woman I want," said Ned patiently. "And that's you. When you get tired of your clubs I'll win. In the meantime we're both young and we can afford to wait."

Enid's nose went up in the air at the suggestion that matrimony would

be her last resort, and she drove Ned out of the study with the announcement that she had to attend a meeting.

The weeks dragged by, and as December approached Ned's calls grew more frequent. At last his hour came.

"I saw Foster this morning," he announced. "He told me that he had taken that set of drawings of yours."

To his surprise Enid burst into tears and threw herself on the divan.

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked solicitously, bending over her.

"Did you lose the money?"

"Worse than that," she sobbed. "Stolen!" he asked. "Perhaps the elevator boy—"

"I may as well tell you," she exclaimed, sitting up. "I got a check for \$200, but I need more, and I don't know where I shall get it, and I did want a new dress."

"But, where is the money going?" he cried. "You can't have run \$200 into debt."

"It's not exactly that. It's the club's," she explained, the tears welling into her eyes. "Just look!"

She held toward him a packet of letters, and curiously Ned looked then over.

## Too Many Clubs



ERHAPS a club is a small thing to fight over, but three clubs (women's clubs at that) brought about the misunderstanding between Enid Veatch and Ned Burnham.

Ever since Enid had sought to support herself as an illustrator, Ned had looked after her, first in a brotherly sort of way and then in a more lover-like manner as the months progressed. It had all ended in a tacit engagement.

Then Enid joined a woman's club and a second and third. It was after the third that Ned felt himself called upon to speak. Fresh in her enthusiasm for clubdom Enid had not only refused to accept his advice, but she refused to receive him again personally, and Ned had left the little studio, declaring that he would never reenter it.

He did come again, but not as often as before, and partly to show how little she cared for what he thought and in part to gain some excitement to replace the old, sweet friendship, Enid joined more clubs, until she wore as many emblems as

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ENID BELONGED TO ALL THE LADIES' CLUBS.



"I KNEW NOTHING OF THE CORRESPONDENCE UNTIL ETTA CAME EAST."

ever seen.

For years Saunders had toiled the matchmakers and the maids with a skill which had won for him the nickname Saunders, son of Strategy. The debutantes of a dozen seasons had smiled upon him without eliciting more than a noncommittal smile in return, but now Saunders had been bowled completely over by a young woman of whom he knew nothing more than her address.

He had left the train before the girl returned, but he carried with him a photographic memory. It lent inspiration to his pen in the composition of a letter in which he besought her to grant him the favor of her acquaintance.

The next few days were spent in a fever of alternate hope and despair. The postman on the route was gradually coming to the opinion that Saunders was suffering from incipient paresis when a dainty envelope rewarded Saunders' waiting and translated him from the thirteenth of despair to the seventh heaven of delight.

It was a letter written as skillfully as his own. Miss Manson expressed herself as flattered at the compliments paid her, and was not averse to eventually granting Mr. Saunders' request, but first she must be more fully assured of his worthiness, and to that end suggested a probationary period of correspondence.

Saunders hastened to acquiesce and in reply he filled a dozen pages with brought back a scanty four. Miss Manson was evidently not of a belief that it was more blessed to give than to receive, but Saunders treasured these brief epistles, perfect save in one particular, and dreamed his dream of love.

The one jarring note was the handwriting. Saunders was sensitive to penmanship and it seemed to him that the style was more masculine than Miss Manson's personality suggested. He had expected a dainty,

a low voice. "I feel that an explanation is due you, Mr. Saunders. Etta is my cousin and lives in Claverly. I was visiting her, and when I left I found that my suit case handle was broken."

"There was no time in which to have it repaired, and Etta loaned me hers. I was to purchase a suit case when I went to Chicago and ship her back by express. She put on a tag that I might have no trouble in Chicago, and it was her address, not mine, that you copied on the train."

"I knew nothing of the correspondence until Etta came east and brought your letters with her. She seems to have derived considerable entertainment from the incident. She is an inveterate practical joker."

"And it was she who—?" Saunders glanced at the girl who stood smilingly acknowledging the introduction to the passing line of guests.

Now he could understand the mystery of the masculine handwriting for there was something almost boyish about Marietta's dark beauty.

With a groan he realized what a capital story she could make of the episode, for there was a twinkle in her eye that betokened both mischief and a sense of humor. With a word of excuse to the girl by his side, he went forward to face the music.

Marietta's hand clasped his in frankly friendly grasp.

"I think I know you," she said with a smile. "Don't worry, though. I've made me promise never to tell—and entirely astray. That's a hint for which you should be very grateful."

"More grateful than you realize," declared Saunders fervently as he gave place to the newest arrival and was still hope that the son of Strategy might retrieve the situation, and more than ever did he desire his lady of the car.

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